



# **Risk Communication for PFAS Research Lahne Mattas-Curry**

November 5, 2018



## Elements of Good Risk Communication

**Risk communication is the communication of health, safety, or environmental risks.**

**The purpose of risk communication varies:**

It can motivate the audience to take an action or it can be used to inform or educate an audience or to encourage consensus.\*

### **Basic Elements of Good Risk Communication\*\***

**Trust is the foundation of risk communication.**

- \* Be the expert and establish credibility
- \* Communicate early and often
- \* Know your audience
- \* Perception is reality
- \* Simplify language
- \* Deal with uncertainty
- \* Address misinformation

\* Risk Communication: A handbook for communicating environmental, safety, and health risks 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2018)

\*\*Adapted from presentation by Dr. Viswanath from T.H. Chan School of Public Health course "Applied Risk Communication for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" November 2016

# Deliberative Process / Ex. 5

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### ORD Communications Role in PFAS Communications

- ✧ OW Communications is the lead for PFAS communications (Andrea Drinkard/Christina Wadlington)
- ✧ We support OW Comms by helping to communicate the science involved in PFAS action
- ✧ There are more opportunities to communicate the research we are doing
  - More proactive science communications
  - Strategic media placement (e.g. targeted media outreach)

# Deliberative Process / Ex. 5

**Why do we care about communicating the science?**

- ✧ **Objective:** States, tribes, and local communities have communicated the need for data, methods and analysis, technology, models, and tools to manage PFAS at the local levels. ORD is in the process of developing the necessary science and is also providing technical support to help PFAS management at the state, tribal, and local level.
- ✧ **Goal:** Encourage use of ORD science and promote technical support – including data, methods and analysis, technology, models, and tools – that will help states, tribes, and local communities manage PFAS concerns.
- ✧ **Measurement:** We can determine science use by monitoring web downloads and web statistics, qualitative feedback from stakeholders, attendance at webinars, social media engagement, media placement and interviews (reach), and Congressional briefings.



## Audiences for PFAS Research

- EPA program offices and regions
- Federal agencies
- States, tribes, local communities
- Risk assessors/risk managers
- Impacted public
- Media
- Congressional representatives

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# Deliberative Process / Ex. 5



**We are taking a broad approach to communicating science related to PFAS.**

**Communication Tactics:**

- ✧ ORD communication channels
- ✧ Stakeholder outreach
- ✧ Conferences, workshops, and speaking engagements
- ✧ Inter-Agency Collaboration
- ✧ Industry related meetings

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## PFAS Research Key Messages

### **EPA Researchers are:**

- providing technical support to states, tribes, and local governments, as requested, to help them manage PFAS in their communities.
- identifying drinking water treatment technologies, along with associated costs to help communities make the best choices in drinking water treatment based on the needs of their community.
- developing and validating analytical methods that will ensure that government and private laboratories can accurately and consistently measure PFAS in the environment. This is critical for estimating exposure and risk.
- assessing the human health impacts and toxicity of PFAS. Researchers have reviewed data currently available in scientific literature and are developing toxicity assessments where data support that effort. Where there are data gaps, researchers are using computational toxicology to develop data. Results from this research will be combined with exposure estimates to identify priority PFAS for additional study. This information will help determine toxicity of chemicals where there currently is little or no information and can help infer more across the class of PFAS.

# Deliberative Process / Ex. 5



## PFAS Research Key Messages

- measuring PFAS in air, drinking water, soils, and other environmental media to understand how and to what degree people might be exposed to PFAS in their communities.
- exploring whether end-of-life waste streams such as landfills, incinerators, or recycled waste streams contribute to PFAS in the environment.
- evaluating waste management technologies, such as thermal treatment and composting, to manage consumer and industrial processes at end-of-life disposal to help reduce PFAS in the environment.



## Upcoming Communication Opportunities

### PFAS Research Releases

- \* PFBS and GenX tox assessments (OW lead)
- \* Method 537.1 Update – to include GenX
- \* Drinking Water Treatment Options – update to the Drinking Water Treatability Database
- \* Tier I toxicity testing (75 chemicals)

### Upcoming Conferences

- \* APHA
- \* SETAC
- \* SOT
- \* APHL
- \* NEHA

# Deliberative Process / Ex. 5



## Questions/Discussion